## SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 233

1	A resolution to declare February 26, 2020, as Black Farmers
2	Awareness Day in the state of Michigan.
3	Whereas, Since the antebellum period, black farmers in
4	Michigan have fought continuously to acquire self-determination of
5	their lives, and that of their families, through the attainment,
6	retention and cultivation of farmland; and
7	Whereas, By 1920, almost one million, or 14.3%, of the
8	nation's farmers were black and they owned nearly 16 million acres
9	of farmland; and
10	Whereas, By 1997, the number of the nation's black farmers hit
11	an all-time low when the census revealed that only 18,541 were left
12	and they comprised only 1% of the total number of farmers in the

- 1 country; and
- Whereas, The huge number of economic and racially-
- 3 discriminatory obstacles placed in their paths, including the
- 4 untimely delivery of operating loans, insufficient information
- 5 about program availability, and racist treatment in many United
- 6 States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offices, has resulted in
- 7 the declination of their numbers at a rate nearly three times that
- 8 of white farmers and the loss of more than 50% of black-owned
- 9 farmland since 1910; and
- 10 Whereas, A collaborative, grassroots efforts of black farmers,
- 11 their families, legal teams, and social justice organizations
- 12 finally sued the USDA for their racially discriminatory policies
- 13 and practices, and enjoyed victory in 1997 when they received over
- 14 \$1 billion in damages after winning the class-action lawsuit
- 15 Timothy Pigford et al., v Dan Glickman, resulting in what was then
- 16 the largest class-action civil rights settlement in the history of
- 17 the country; and
- 18 Whereas, During the 10 years it took to complete this lawsuit,
- 19 many black farmers lost their land, homes, livelihood, health, and
- 20 hope in their government, which has had a devastating and negative
- 21 impact on; and
- Whereas, When the loss of farmland became more noticeable,
- 23 black farmers and civil rights activists initiated action to stave
- 24 the land loss by acquiring land to farm collectively as a means of
- 25 reducing food insecurity in black communities, striving toward food
- 26 sovereignty, controlling the means of production and distribution
- 27 of food, and furthering the economic development of blacks; and
- 28 Whereas, There has been a resurgence of black farmers in
- 29 Michigan. A 2018 report showed that since 2002, the number of black

- 1 farm operators had increased from 243 to 356, accounting for 0.5%
- 2 of the farm operators in Michigan; and
- 3 Whereas, Michigan's rural black farmers have worked closely
- 4 with black urban growers to establish farms in cities like Detroit
- 5 and Flint and are united around the common issues of food
- 6 sovereignty and self-empowerment through food production; now,
- 7 therefore, be it
- 8 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of
- 9 this legislative body declare February 26, 2020, as Black Farmers
- 10 Awareness Day in the state of Michigan. We recognize the trials,
- 11 tribulations and accomplishments of Michigan's black farmers and
- 12 urge the citizenry to learn more about the richness of their
- 13 history and the fight to attain food security and food sovereignty
- 14 in Michigan's underserved communities.